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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN** (this item is being given to delegates attending the conference for lobbying purposes; it is not being sent to any media. Sections can use the news release as they see fit.)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Campaign on Women - 7 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 12/95, 34/95, 37/95, 42/95
44/95, 68/95

RWANDA - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95, 64/95

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

MONGOLIA - 18 APRIL - SEE NEWS SERVICE 67/95

ETHIOPIA - 19 APRIL - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

TIBET - 9 MAY - SEE NEWS SERVICE 64/95

GERMANY - 16 MAY - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

ROMANIA - 22 MAY - SEE NEWS SERVICE 66/95

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

JAPAN - 4 MAY - SEE NEWS SERVICE 64/95

ISRAEL AND OCCUPIED TERRITORIES - 11 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

IRAN - 31 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

EVENTS AND MISSIONS

The details below are for your information only, and there may or may not be media work involved. Can you please not publicize anything until further notice from the IS.

Brazil - 28 March (Pierre's visit) - SEE NEWS SERVICE 29/95, 59/95, 60/95

MISSION TO KENYA 16 March - 2 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

MISSION TO HAITI 18 March - 3 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 58/95

MISSION TO GUATEMALA 21 MARCH - 3 APR - SEE NEWS SERVICE 67/95

MISSION TO PARAGUAY & URUGUAY 22 MARCH - 12 APRIL - SEE NEWS SERVICE 67/95

MISSION TO CHAD - 27 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- 31 MARCH 1995
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UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN MAY END WITH EMPTY WORDS

NEW YORK -- Governments meeting behind closed doors to set the agenda for discussions at the Fourth United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women may conclude with an empty text that fails to affirm the human rights of women.

In the concluding days of the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, Amnesty International said that there is a real possibility that the final Platform for Action document will be the product of backroom deals, ignore human rights violations against women by governments, and fail to affirm basic rights in language already agreed upon in previous international fora.

Amnesty International believes that it is the responsibility of all governments participating in the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure that the Platform for Action is a document which will produce real and measurable positive changes for women in all parts of the world.

Amnesty International believes true change might come from a strong document adopted by this body that calls on governments:

- to quickly implement existing standards for human rights to the betterment of women,
- to reaffirm the universality and indivisibility of the human rights of women, and
- to reaffirm the role of activist women by ensuring open access for non-governmental organizations to the Fourth United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women.

Behind closed doors

Government representatives are negotiating the text of the Platform for Action behind closed doors, excluding non-governmental organizations. There are signs that the final document will be weak when discussing human rights, which should appear in the Platform for Action in three sections: violence against women, armed conflict, and human rights.

"If governments truthfully acknowledge the role played by women activists in promoting and defending human rights, then they should ensure that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have full access to the preparatory process going on now in New York," Amnesty International said.

Access should be also guaranteed for NGOs to the Beijing conference, Amnesty International said.

Ignoring government violations

Many governments are reluctant to accept responsibility for the human rights violations committed against women by their own security forces, police, soldiers and other government agents.

"Although there's much talk about violence against women in society and in the family, governments appear to be avoiding a plain condemnation and a solid statement to make it clear that such violations by state agents will not be officially tolerated," Amnesty International said.

"If they fail to send that signal, then governments are telling men at all levels of society that violence against women will be overlooked," the human rights organization added.

Watered-down text

"At the insistence of a handful of governments, the final text of the meeting may reflect the lowest common denominator that can be agreed between governments," Amnesty International said. "This means the Platform for Action will fail even to uphold existing rights guarantees for women."

The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights affirmed that women's human rights are inalienable, integral and indivisible and that the full enjoyment by women of all human rights should be a priority for governments and the UN. Yet the difficulties of agreeing any text for the Platform of Action means that governments may fail to give priority attention to the need for women to have full access to all human rights.

"The adoption of this Platform of Action should be an occasion for governments to commit themselves to human rights standards, which they formulated and agreed in other UN fora as the basis for their own conduct," Amnesty International said.

On 16 March, the chairperson of the Commission announced a statement expressing the commission's grave concern at the execution of Flor Contemplacion, a migrant worker from the Philippines who was hanged in Singapore for murder. Amnesty International had earlier expressed serious doubts about the fairness of her trial and concern about the execution.

Amnesty International fears that despite these strong concerns, the Platform for Action now being drafted will do little to give women like Flor Contemplacion access to their civil, economic, political or social rights.

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